

The Old Ball Game

A recent poll showed more Americans preferred watching baseball than any other sport. What disturbed baseball owners, however, was the fact that baseball held a far greater lead in the middle groups.

That indicates football and other sports are doing a better job of attracting the young. Baseball men, therefore, hope to do something about the trend. One of the ideas is to hold more bat days in the Major Leagues — days when every youngster who attends a game is given a miniature bat.

Another is to give increasing attention to the minor leagues, which seem to be dying away, and to baseball for the very young and in schools and colleges.

It was surprising to see how great the baseball lead was over all other sports but it was also revealing to note that the younger the age group the less popular, comparatively, baseball is. Thus the national pastime, as baseball has been known for almost a hundred years, is in danger of losing its number-one rating unless it keeps abreast of the times in promotion and appeal to young people.

Those who love the game and what it stands for hope baseball will not fall behind the times; of all the major outdoor sports it is perhaps the most democratic in concept. In the nine-man lineup any player can star offensively and any defensively which is something that can be said of few team sports. In addition, it is a game in which weight and size are not prerequisites of success.

A News Club Ends

It is heartening that the Department of Defense has at last abandoned its repressive news policy, which sharply restricted reporters' access to information and opinion at the Pentagon. After five years, the policy has quietly been killed off by Secretary McNamara. The public is well rid of it.

The policy, which came into being at the time of the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, required that when Pentagon officials talked with newsmen they must either have a monitor sit in on the talk or file a full report — including the reporter's identity and the subjects discussed — with McNamara's office the same day. Though both reporters and military officials have managed to circumvent the rule to some extent, so that the policy was not as restrictive as it might have been, nevertheless it was a considerable bar to the free flow of information.

In his memorandum revoking the policy, McNamara said: "The Department of Defense has an obligation to guarantee that full and prompt information is made available to the American people as a basis for their understanding of national defense and the operations of this department." That has been true all along. The end of this restriction is welcome, but it should have been dropped long ago.

OTHERS SAY

All Too True

Once upon a time there was an ant who worked hard all day in the fields. It was summer and the ant was busy cutting grass and dragging it home.

The ant had a grasshopper for a neighbor. The grasshopper sat in his doorway singing all day. When winter comes, the ant had a whole bale of grass. But he had violated the federal farm law for over-harvesting grass and was fined and the surplus was seized.

The grasshopper received the surplus in exchange for food stamps.

Moral: Under the Great Society, grasshoppers have the jump on everybody else.

Sound familiar?—Lawrence Journal World.

We're all accustomed in this inflated age to reading about "millions" and "billions." But do you really appreciate the difference? Try this one on for size: If the lady of the house goes shopping for 40 hours a week, spending \$1,000 an hour, it will take her 25 weeks to spend a million dollars. If she followed the same schedule, spending a billion dollars would take her 481 years! That's one way to tell the difference between a million and a billion. Using her charge-card, at the rate suggested, it would take her 158,009 years to spend the equivalent of the U. S. National debt!—West Point (Miss.) Times Leader.

We've reached the age where we catch ourselves reading the doctor columns to see if they mention any of our symptoms.—Louis Nelson Bowman in the King City (Mo.) Tri-County News.

Morning Report:

I have no firm evidence that Mao is a CIA agent but if he is on our payroll, there's no denying he's earning his money. Nobody in the State Department is able to line up enemies for China at a faster clip than he is. Of course, he is a bit heavy-handed.

Roughing up the Soviet ambassador might be accepted diplomatic practice these days, but burning down the British embassy in Peking was a little rough for our secret operative. Taking over a Soviet freighter in a Chinese port infuriated the Russians and that Chinese ship putting on her nasty acts in Genoa made the Italians wild.

Mind you, I'm not trying to second guess the CIA but I think it should now remind our man that General de Gaulle also has a burnable building or two in Peking. Or is Mao one of those runaway agents who won't take orders?

Abe Mellinkoff

The Big Hike Up the Hill



HERB CAEN SAYS:

It Was a Good Tale, But Entirely Off the Record

Lunching over a tape recorder at Jack's the other day: Maestro Arthur (Pops) Fiedler and his biographer, Robin Moore, who wrote "Green Berets"—but seems to be finding Fiedler an even tougher nut to crack than Vietnam. Robin, re-winding his tape for the 19th time: "Everytime he tells me a good story for the book he says at the end, 'That's off the record.' We can't even agree on a title." "How about 'The Life and Loves of Arthur Fiedler'?" somebody suggested, but the Maestro shook his head: "My love life isn't at all interesting." . . . After they'd walked out of the restaurant, a waiter discovered Moore's tape recorder on the table and ran up Sacramento St. to return it. "Thanks," said Robin lugubriously, "but there's nothing on it anyway."

San Quentin's front office is going berserk trying to find out which prisoners are "borrowing" what Ditto machine to crank out a saucy, needling underground newspaper (printed on yellow paper) called The Outlaw. Now this is the kind of underground operation that takes guts — the culprits could wind up with a long stretch in the "hole."

Palo Alto lives! Kay Landry went to a costume party where the first prize for originality was won easily by a Peninsula bachelor. He painted his body white, wrote four-letter words all over himself and went as a man's room wall. . . Things are also groovy in Merced, Calif., where Drs. Earl B. Eager and Wayne L. Norton have joined with Dr. Lloyd J. Bever to form Eager, Bever & Norton. . . At the Cliff Hotel: Author Kathryn Hulme, whose biggest success was "The Nun's Story." She visited the Haight-Ashbury, where she had spent her childhood, and had only one snif-fish comment: "How DARE they!"

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A defense attorney in a drunk driving case, fighting the Motor Vehicle code on implied consent to drunk driving tests: "Your Honor, my client was incapable of refusing to consent to the taking of tests." Attorney Bill Pinney, up on a forensic precipice: "What my worthy opponent says could very well be true, among other things."

The University of California front office in Berkeley denies that Mara Sykes, spread barely over eight pages of the Sept. Playboy, is a Cal student, as described in the magazine, but this only indicates the UC front office doesn't know everything. Se is indeed a coed, but with a different last name (Playboy never spent \$1,500 in an earthier cause) . . . Add traffic casualties: the "Drive Carefully" sign at the Treasure Island exit. A car ran into it.

A note from Carroll Soohoo, on camera safari in Africa with Carey Baldwin, retired Superintendent of the S. F. Zoo: "We were chased in our Land Rover by the same rhinoceros as last year in the Ngorongoro Crater. It was the same rhinoceros cow, with her calf one year larger. It was nice to hear the patter of their little feet as they dashed up to greet us and attempt to knock over our vehicle! Wish you were here to enjoy it all with us." Sounds simply smashing.

Report From Our Man In San Francisco

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AFFAIRS OF STATE

New Textbook Adoption Laws Are Called Futile

By HENRY C. MACARTHUR

Capitol News Service
SACRAMENTO — One piece of legislation signed into law by Governor Ronald Reagan is hailed as an accomplishment by Assemblyman John L. E. "Bud" Collier, R-Los Angeles. This is Collier's bill extending the time of display of textbooks to be used in the schools in public libraries prior to their adoption by the state board of education.

Now, books must be displayed 30 days in 10 libraries of the state. Under the new bill, this is increased to 60 days in 50 public libraries. And in the case of history books, the requirement is that they be placed in 200 libraries for public scrutiny before being adopted.

And in addition, if the content of a textbook is revised or modified, assuming it already is in use in the public schools, these also must be available in libraries.

The Collier measure was brought about by the controversy over the history textbook "Land of the Free," used in eighth grades, which raised a storm of protest over its content when approved by the state board.

In presenting the increased requirements for display of books, Collier's

theory is that the people of the state should have sufficient opportunity to voice approval or disapproval of the books which will guide the knowledge of the forthcoming generation.

While Collier had a good idea, the question is whether the execution of his theory is good, bad, or indifferent. It's quite simple to make

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On Sacramento Beat

reading material available to the public, but not so simple to get the public to take advantage of their opportunity to voice approval or disapproval of the books that go into the schools.

Despite the fact that prospective history textbooks will be available for scrutiny in 200 libraries, it is doubtful that there will be any great rush of parents to spend an evening reading them, and even if there are isolated instances in which a textbook is read, there is no assurance that anyone intends to pay attention to the objections that might be lodged.

Thus from one standpoint at least, the Collier bill would appear to be futile as

far as being an effective medium for stopping the presentation of faulty textbooks to students. And even if a hundred people read the books, there would be a hundred different objections, all of which would make the public a sort of gigantic curriculum commission to decide on the propriety of the textbooks.

There seems to be little objection to books other than those dealing with the history of the nation.

Probably a more cogent cure would be to foster legislation requiring the writers of history books to stick to facts, rather than to make attempts to dress up history in an effort to make it appear as something they would like to have, rather than what it actually was.

Dates, places, and events are common knowledge, for the most part indisputable. Motives, however, are something else again, and the cover-up of facts leads to the distortion of events in the past.

Consequently, in some ways, Collier's bill may be good, in others, unnecessary. The sum and substance is that it will encounter an indifferent public.

ROYCE BRIER

The Story Is Credible, With a 9-to-1 Martini

That eagle-stork air war yawn out of Turkey reminds you it is time for the annual Nature column. Everybody is interested in Nature these days, especially as there is not much of it left, what with the various highway commissions and similar civilizing institutions.

We were brought to believe the eagle was king of the air, seeing he is the national bird, but the Turks just laugh. A stork can lick an eagle with one wing tied, and the writer is willing to credit this homily. He once saw a couple of wren near Santa Rosa, Calif., dive-bombing a hawk, which had evidently thought their nest was a soft touch, and was getting the hell out of there trailing displaced hawk feathers.

Anyway, the learned professors of Istanbul, though some ornithologists are dubious, say storks and eagles carry on organized warfare.

The storks migrate over mountain passes of western Turkey, and the eagles rise to challenge them. Hundreds on both sides tangle with screams and a general clutter like television air combat, and blood, feathers and carcasses rain down on peaceful men, who are appalled by such savagery.

It seems the storks make

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like an arrow and sink their long beaks into eagle hide, and no more trouble from that eagle. Sometimes the stork can't withdraw his beak, and both critters do a winging into the canyon.

It fair turns a man's stomach to behold such senseless slaughter, amidst the winds and the clouds God, or Allah, gave his creatures to enjoy. But what can you expect of birds, which have never been noted for ration-

al behavior or noble motives?

America, but happily, few storks. You hate to think how the Americans would be sickened if they had to witness such insensate goings-on. They would probably send up some bombers and scatter a few atoms, which would damn-soon cool these malign beasts, teaching them we'll have peace if we have to fight for it.

The only redeeming part of the eagle-stork war is that some storks have been observed searching the battlefield, and when they find a wounded stork, they carry him away, doubtless to some stork hospital. You'll allow this reveals an almost-human precience and compassion.

You may wonder why the writer fell for this part, but if you sit on a terrace on a summer day, some bee is sure to bug your martini, disapproving, no doubt. So you take a fly-swatter to him, and he falls to the brick, dead.

So pretty soon a couple of bees start buzzing the carcass, then one with his mandibles cuts the dead bee at the waist. Then the halves are not too heavy a payload, as we say in the aerial world, and each bee takes a half and with some strain slowly takes off, perhaps to a bee funeral parlor. This makes you kind of sad, going to all that effort for a bee, yet glad bees are smart like men.

If entomologists don't believe this story, let them try it with a 9-1 martini. Why be skeptical, like ornithologists with their storks and eagles?

Alan Grey
Says . . .

For the average Angelino. The person on the street. The subject of conversation . . .

Is the current smog and heat . . .

We took our place in history . . .

And a place that really hurts . . .

When we set another record . . .

For successive smog alerts . . .

To try and write this column . . .

Was a very foolish caper. I'm not sure what was written . . .

Since I couldn't see the paper . . .

WILLIAM HOGAN

Hollywood's Savagry Not Always Among the Stars

My private Nathanael West Festival, celebrated during recent weeks under a series of redwood trees, opened with a rereading of "The Dream Life of Balso Snell."

It continued with "The Day of the Locust" (1939), a unit in "The Collected Works of Nathanael West," which I picked up quite by chance. West was a film writer during the last five years of his life (he died in a car crash in 1940). In "The Days of the Locust" he vented his contempt on the Hollywood environment with a gift of savagry (combined with the electric grace of a Harpo Marx) rare in American literature.

West — who is not everybody's writer, and wasn't in the 30s either — was a member of what the critic Edmund Wilson once labeled "the boys in the back room." They practiced a brand of tight-lipped, gritty prose which became a hallmark of the period; Horace McCoy and James M. Cain come to mind, and to a degree Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler.

West was less "hard-boiled," in the old term, than a compiler of an emotional chart of his age; a brilliant sketch artist, a literary George Grosz rather than the Breughel of Los Angeles.

Yet I find "The Day of the Locust" remains the most stirring of "Hollywood novels," although it is not about producers or stars. It is about the hangers-on

by the sheer vitality of this artist who at heart was a reformer, or at least a sociologist. In an introduction to "The Collected Works of Nathanael West," the critic Alan Ross noted that basically West was always a sociological writer moved by the horrible emptiness of mass lives, that in this sense "all his books are indictments, not so much of economic systems but of life itself."

Few of today's writers of fiction level such strong statements on their society as West did (and as most of those "boys in the back room" did not). Baldwin and LeRo Jones, to some degree, might be exceptions; or, as a mad satirist, Kurt Vonnegut, West projected a rare power and irony and wove into it an element of cock-eyed fantasy all his own. His work remains unique and moving.

West was more than a literary boy in the back room (an O'Hara, a James M. Cain). He was an artist who viewed his world with pity as well as terror, a relentless chronicler of the absurd. We could use a half dozen of him working for us today.

As a novel, "The Day of the Locust" has its flaws. These seem to be canceled

A Letter To My Son

By Tom Rische

High School Teacher and Youth Worker

Dear Bruce,

You may have been having a lot of fun these past few weeks, carrying off Daddy's tools while he was trying to fix up the kitchen, but I guess you learned something.

You banged against the cabinets with the hammer at places that didn't need dents and you put the drill at places where holes weren't required, but finally, we did manage to get the job done — you and I.

One lesson you probably won't figure out until you're older, however — one thing leads to another.

We redecorated our living room a couple of years ago, because we found a good looking rug on sale. That made everything else look so crummy that we redid the whole thing. The same thing happened with the kitchen.

We were having guests for dinner one night and when your mother got ready to

serve dinner we found that it wasn't cooked. The flame went out. Our old stove failed to function for our own meals several times later, so we decided to get a new one.

Then, as you remember, Bruce, we decided to get a built-in stove, and Daddy decided that we'd save money doing it ourselves. The trouble with this situation was that several shelves had to be reworked since they didn't fit the new dimensions. When that happened, the new wood didn't match the 10-year-old finish, so all the cabinets had to be refinished. Mama, too, has some ideas about improvements.

The result: several hundred hours of work and several hundred dollars more than we'd anticipated. But I guess it kept me from getting into trouble.

Yours against adult delinquency,
Your Dad